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ABSTRACT

Based on data gathered in a larger study of audience response to the debates held during the 1976 campaign for the presidency of the United States, a study examined the validity of uses and gratifications measures and explored how these measures were affected by differing levels of audience media activity. The data was drawn from telephone interviews with more than 2,000 registered voters in a small city, who answered questions relating to their expectations concerning the debates and the gratifications they derived from watching the debates. The main eight items used to measure the expectations and gratifications were based on the work of J. Blumler and D. McQuail. The results showed that only three of the eight uses and gratifications measures provided any correlation between identical measures. The findings bring into question the validity and usefulness of the uses and gratifications measures. (FL)

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TESTING THE VALIDITY OF THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS MEASURES: DO THEY WORK?

by

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One question that has intrigued communications researchers for years is how and why people use the mass media. And out of the search for an answer to this question, a number of theories and models of mass media use and behavior have grown. One of these models is the uses and gratifications model. The uses and gratifications model has five basic emelments. First, the audience is seen as an active seeker of information from the media, behaving in a goal directed fashion. Second, much of the initiative in selecting a particular medium for need gratification lies with the audience member. Third, it is acknowledged that the media provide only a part of the communications needs of the audience. Other sources of need satisfaction are also competitng with the media. Fourth, in terms of a methodological measure of the uses and gratifications model, the audience is felt to be able to express their interest and motives for seeking information, or at least recognize them when given a verbal statement of their motives. And finally, it is felt that the audience orientations should be explored on their own terms while value judgements about the cultural signifcance of mass communication is suspended (Blumler and Katz, 1974).

In the early stages of mass communication research, there was an interest in the short term effects that the media had on the audience. Many of the early uses and gratifications studies in this period had four common elements. First of all, they all used basically open ended questions to gain responses about the functions served by the media. Second, the responses were grouped in a qualitative fashion with little emphasis on a statistical grouping of functions by the frequency of responses. Third, there was no attempt to discover any links between the gratifications derived from the media and no exploration into where these gratifications needs may have developed. And finally, the

early studies on uses and gratifications from the media did not look for any interrelationships between different media in an attempt to determine if there was some overall structure of media gratifications (Blumler and Katz, 1974).

Even though some of these early studies had some short comings, they did provide the ground work for renewed interest in the study of uses and gratifications derived from the media. These new studies, although they are starting from a variety of orientations, share some common areas of interest. They are concerned with "(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (5) need gratifications and (6) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones (Blumler and Katz, 1974)."

In a general survey of the uses and gratifications studies, Blumler (1978) said that the research indicates that the people look to the media for three basic reasons: (1) surveillance, (2) diversion, and (3) personal identity. In one of the studies using the uses and gratifications approach, it was discovered that the people of Isreal did receive some amount of gratification from the mass media of television, film, books, newspapers, and radio. However, the overall needs examined were more gratified by non-meida sources than by the mass media (Katz, Gurevitch, Hass, 1973). In another study of the Isrealies, it was shown that in a time of war, the citizens trusted the media for information and interpretation of the totally unexpected conflict. The Isrealies also wanted explanations of the war from their leaders, and they sought relief from anxiety in the media and in conversations. It was also shown that the Isreali population used the media to participate in national grief and mourning. And they found reinforcement for the national solidarity in the media (Peled and Katz, 1974).

Television has been a key media studied in some uses and gratifications investigations. McQuail et al. (1972) found that television provided four main uses for the audience; diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance. A different set of reasons for watching television was discovered amoung a group of children. Greenburg (1974) found that British children watched television for severn major reasons. They were (1) for learning, (2) as a habit, (3) for arousal, (4) for companionship, (5) to relax, (6) to forget, and (7) to pass time. Greenburg pointed out that the data for his study did not investigate the question of whether the data refered to are motivations sought, gratifications received, or some combination of these.

One study trying to look specifically at both the uses of television and the gratifications received from watching television was conducted by Palmgreen and Rayburn (1978). This study used a model that incorporated both the expectations people held about public television in Kentucky and what they actually felt they received from the public television network. Their findings indicated that an approach using both the gratifications sought and obtained is useful in predicting the level of exposure to the public television network among those who make their own viewing decisions. Palmgreen and Rayburn also said that the uses and gratifications approach should not be used separately but rather as a part of a general theory of communication.

In yet another investigation of the relations between the gratifications sought and the gratifications obtained by a television audience, Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (1979) came to three conclusions. They found that (1) the gratifications sought are moderately to strongly related to corresponding gratifications obtained, (2) that those who watch only one television news program have their gratifications sought shaped

more strongly by the gratifications obtianed from this particular program than those who have other sources of gratification such as watching more than one television news program, and (3) the dimensions sought and obtained from television news are similar yet different. It should be noted that this study used data that was collected at one point in time, a point that will be discussed later in more detail.

One of the classic studies in uses and gratifications was concerned with a political event. This study centered on the 1964 British Parlimentary elections and the reasons given for watching political broadcasts. This study by Blumler and McQuail found that the voters were watching political broadcasts for four basic reasons; (1) reinforcement, (2) vote guidance, (3) surveillance, and (4) excitement. Becker (1976) found additional support for the inclusion of the Blumler and McQuail gratification variables in an effects analysis of the mass media. Becker's study dealt with the Senate Watergate hearings and the reaction to and knowledge of Watergate by voters in the 1974 elections.

In a somewhat different approach to the study of the mass media, Johnstone (1974) looked at the social and psychological factors that gave rise to media exposure. He found in his study of high school students that there is a social basis governing the selection of items in the mass media. Johnstone also discovered that the audience used the mass media as either an escape from their enviornment or as a method to keep in contact with their enviornment.

Knowledge of birth control information and the attempt to gain more information through the mass media was the subject of a study by Kline, Miller and Morrison (1974). They found that among their adolescent audience, those who knew as much or less about birth control than their referents learned more about the topic from the media. And those who knew more than

their peers tended to learn less about birth control from the media. These findings, the authors say, tend to suggest that the media does not create a greater knowledge gap among the audience, but rather acts to close the gap.

Common Theme

While the preceeding list of studies provides only a partial review of the uses and gratifications studies, there appears to be some support for and belief in the uses and gratifications model of communication. One common theme that runs throughout these studies in a basic set of assumptions made about the audience and the effects the media has upon them. Blumler (1978) says that the uses and gratifications authors feel that the audience uses the mass media for a variety of reasons. He adds that many people feel that the audience's social roles and situations may lead to different requirements or needs from the media. These ideas usually appear in the underlying assumptions the researchers make before embarking on their investigations.

Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass (1973) make the assumption that the audience uses the media for their own needs more readily than the media overpower them. They also feel that the media are entertainment and diversion sources as much as they are sources of information and influence. Katz et al. also feel that the selection and use of media content are considerably influenced by social roles and psychological predispositions. In their study, McQuail et al. (1972) made several basic assumptions including (1) most television viewing is goal directed, (2) people are able to say what they motivations are for viewing and that these can be discovered only by talking with the people, (3) they expect many motivations for viewing, several of which may actually overlap, (4) that media use is a process, where media content, individual needs,

roles and values in the social context in which the person finds himself interact.

The Critics

Although there is some belief in the uses and gratifications model of communication, this approach is not without its critics. One of the basic criticisms of the uses and gratifications model is that it is an atheoretical approach having as its chief concern the use of method rather than the development of theory (Elliott, 1974). This criticism is countered by Blumler and Katz (1974) when they say "...uses and gratifications research is a line of inquiry that is capable of reaching out effectively to a wide range of new theoretical developments in other disciplines, rather than as an esoteric, self-contained, and highly specialized subarea of communication study on its own."

Another line of criticism leveled at the uses and gratifications approach refers to the terms and concepts that are used in many of the studies. Swanson (1974) said that the uses and gratifications studies use a set of labels that have no common meaning, that one does not know exactly what the conceptual foundations are of uses and gratifications. He added that there is a failure to specify precise meanings for concepts so they can be used consistently and unequivocally without the creation of confusion. McLeod and Becker (1974) have called for a more satisfactory system of classifying motives if there is to be a link established between underlying motives and the media gratifications.

The method of gathering data to measure these concepts has also been criticized. The methodological shortcomings of the uses and gratifications method are, according to some critics, based upon the use of self-report data and upon the techniques used to analyze the data. The use of self report data has limitations, according to Becker (1974). These limitations

include; (1) the assumption that people are capable of providing answers regarding relevant gratifications, (2) that people are willing to provide information on gratifications, even though some gratifications may be more socially acceptable than others. Kline et al. (1974) feel that the use of self report data may not work in all situations. They feel that it is possible that the respondents may have some "bias" in reporting needs for information. They also feel that people may not be able to measure their need for a type of information because of a general ignorance of the topic area.

In a concurring approach, Lometti et al. (1977) feel that one of the problems with the dimensions used in the uses and gratifications studies is that the dimensions are defined a priori by the researcher, possibly resulting in dimensions that are more dependent upon researcher input than on subject responses. They also feel that this bias may substantially overestimate the number of gratifications that are operative. Lometti et al. (1977) also feel that there may be a serious difference in the way people report how they evaluate communications channels and the way those channels are actually evaluated.

While the previous criticisms were directed at some rather specific aspects of the uses and gratifications method, McGuire (1974) presented three general criticisms of the method and his views that seek to answer the critics. The first general criticism of the method is that media exposure is more of a chance occurance, not motivated by deliberate processes developing from an internal drive. McGuire counters with the thought that for the people to continue to use the media, there must be some form of reinforcement from the media. The second general criticism of the uses and gratifications method addressed by McGuire is the one that

says that the potential gratifications which can be received from the media are so weak that they would not play a large part in satisfying the real needs of the audience. While McGuire admits that perhaps the media can provide gratifications for the needs gripping the individual like love, failure, and other strong human conditions, he feels that the media can provide some form of gratification since the people spend so much time with the media. In short, he argues that the audience must ge getting something from the media because they keep using it.

A third argument that McGuire mentions is that the assumption that the media gratifications can be found leads to an overrating of the rationality of the audience and the indexing of media exposure. He responds to this argument with the thought that although the initial exposure to a media program may be through chance, the continued exposure to the media indicates that there are motives governing this exposure and gratifications received from the media.

One area of criticism that was indirectly addressed by McGuire and directly addressed by some of the critics of the uses and gratifications model is the assumption that the audience is made up of individuals actively engaged in seeking information from the media to satisfy their needs. Blumler (1978) has said that in the past, uses and gratifications reseachers have taken as an article of faith that the audience is active and rational in its search for information. He points out that there have not been any empirical studies of audience activity.

The reasons for not studying the activity of the audience are threefold. First of all, the term active has a variety of meanings including utility (what uses the people have for the media), intentionality (prior motivations govern media consumption), imperviousness to influence (the obstinate audience). A second reason for the lack of investigation of audience

of audience activity is that the audience has been treated as an either/or matter, ie. they are considered to be either active or passive. The third reason for the lack of investigation into audience activity is that some media may provide more or less audience activity than other media (Blumler, 1978).

Swanson (1974) has said that the researchers have failed to take seriously the idea that people are active rather than passive. They have not looked into how people perceive and interpret media content and whether those interpretations do indeed provide an expected link between needs, uses and gratifications.

In light of the lack of investigation into audience activity, Blumler (1978) offered a variety of methods to asses the activity of the audience. He said that one could look at different moments when looking at activity. Before exposure, a person consults information, or plans when he will watch the media or has a clear prior expectations of what media can provide, or he can specify criteria of what counts as superior items of interest to him. During consumption, Blumler adds, one could look at the degree of attention paid to media or the ability to recall what is included in the media. A third technique could be to look at the readiness to reflect on the media material, to talk about it with others, or to absorb the material into other activities after exposure to the media.

Blumler also suggested that one look at how different indicies of activity relate to each other, and if there is more or less media activity across time. He suggested that one investigate the differences between those who watch out of habit and those who are keenly interested in the situation.

When looking at audience activity and the impact of the media using the uses and gratificatons measures, the researcher may make the assumption that the measures used to asses audience uses and gratifications are valid measures. But some people feel that there has been too little attention paid to the formal validation of self report gratification measures. McLeod and Becker (1974) have offered four basic approaches to the validation of self report media gratification items. The first of these methods does not involve validity per se but rather reliability as a necessary condition for validity. One can have some faith that the responses to the uses and gratifications measures are more than a variety of comments or that they are so highly tied to the situation that that they no predictive power if it can be shown that the gratifications items have stable correlations across time. Also, if one can show that there are intercorrelations among items that are supposed to be theoretically connected, then once again one can have some faith in the gratifications measures.

A second approach to the validation of the uses and gratifications items would be through the demonstration that some known criterion group is higher or lower than a control group on the self reported gratifications. This, McLeod and Becker (1974) argue, would provide more validation for the uses and gratifications measures.

A third method of assessing the validity of the measures would be to demonstrate a connection between two or more variables that are supposed to be theoretically linked in a causal fashion. The problem with this approach, McLeod and Becker point out, is the lack of sophisticated theory in dealing with the sociological and psychological origins of media gratifications.

The final approach, and one used by McLeod and Becker to show that there is some validity to the uses and gratifications measures, is to determine the validity of the constructs through the study of gratifications effects.

Two Thoughts

It appears that there are two main currents of thought in the uses and gratifications studies. One school of thought holds that the uses and gratifications model provides some method of explaining the hows and whys of media use. The supporters of uses and gratifications feel that the audience is made up of rational seekers of information and material that will be helpful to them in providing some satisfaction of their needs. The assumption is also made that not only are the audience members aware of their needs and how the media can satisfy them, but that those studying media uses and gratifications are able to identify and measure those needs and gratifications.

Running counter to the belief in the uses and gratifications model are the critics of this method. The critics feel that there are several weak points in the method which are housed in the basic assumptions of the uses and gratifications model. More specifically, critics of this method point out that the audience may not be so rational in their use of the media, that in fact some if not all of the audience is not involved in the seeking and using of information to satisfy their needs. Also, the critics feel that the methodology used to measure these uses and gratifications, the use of self report measures, the reliance on researcher defined dimensions, and the lack of consideration of other factors such as the sociological and psychological enviornment of the individual can lead to inaccurate findings and an overestimation of the results.

The Purpose

The lines are drawn. Some people believe in and make use of the uses and gratifications model of communication while others criticize the approach and offer alternative methods of inquiry. No matter what one's opinions are regarding uses and gratifications, there is room for continued debate and investigation into the subject. And it is the idea of further investigation into the uses and gratifications method that forms the basis of this study. Specifically, this study will seek to focus on the validity of the uses and gratifications measures and how these measures are affected, if at all, by taking into account differing levels of audience media activity. The data for this study is drawn from a larger study that centered around the 1976 presidential and vice-presidential debates.

The Setting

On September 23, 1976, Edwin Newman of NBC News presided over a program that was being held "in the hope of promoting a wider and better informed participation by the American people." That program, which was the first in a series of debates between the presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 1976 campaign (Jackson-Beeck and Meadow, 1979).

The interest in the debates was high. The Gallup Poll estimated that 67 to 70 percent of the homes in America were tuned in to the debates (Chaffee, 1978). They tuned in for a variety of reasons. Ford was begining to narrow the gap between Carter and himself. Many people were looking at the debates as the pivotal point for Ford's move to victory in the upcoming election. Carter was relatively unknown and voters felt they could study him close at hand. During the campaign, Carter's vaguness was a special campaign issue. Many people seemed to feel that the debates would clarify where Carter stood on the issues (Swanson and Swanson, 1978).

The debates have led to a lot of investigation into the content and effects of the programs. In a review of the 1976 presidential debate studies, Chaffee (1978) said that the most significant findings are (1) prior to the debates, many people were uncertain about their vote and thus looked to the debates to provide information on the candidate's stands on policy issues, (2) the debates provided issue information for voters, and most voters learned from them, (3) the most regular viewers changed most in their voting intentions, were least influenced by predispositional factors, and were most likely to vote in conformance with the policy differences they perceived between themselves and the candidates.

Many of the debate studies have looked at the effects of the debates on the audience. The findings are sometimes contradictory. For example, although Chaffee (1978) said some research has shown that the voters who watched the debates learned from them, Atwood and Biglow (1980) found there was very little learning of issues and information about the candidates during the time that the debates were taking place. Jackson-Beeck and Meadow (1979) said the debates did little in the way of covering issues of national concern. They felt that the debates were held mainly to provide the candidates with an opportunity to address the nation at a low cost.

Although the debaters may not have covered vital issues of public concern, it was found that they did have some agenda setting function on the audience. Some of the debate agenda was synthesized into the personal agenda of those who watched the debates. But the debate agenda was not synthesized into the personal agenda of those who did not watch the debates (Swanson and Swanson, 1978). The debates, it was later discovered, even had some impact in the Netherlands (deBock, 1978).

While some studies have looked at the audience impact of the 1976 debates, others have been concerned with the content of the debates themselves. Davis (1979) investigated the amount of eye contact maintained by the debaters with the audience and the interviewers. In contrast, Tiemens (1978) was concerned with the visual content of the debates.

The Data

Data for this ex post facto study comes from a larger data set that was collected before, during, and after the debates in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, a town of 35,000 located along the west bank of the Mississippi River, about one hundred miles south of St. Louis.

The population for this study was defined as all registered voters, both non-students and students at Southeast Missouri State Unversity, located in Cape Girardeau. The total population for the study was 15,000 non-students and 5,934 students. The sampling was a systematic sample, with a sampling fraction of 1/10. The sample was selected by entering the combined lists of the Cape Girardeau city directory and the 1976 list of students attending the university. By doing this, the total potential population for the original study was 2,093.

The data for the original study was gathered in several waves. One wave involved a predebate interview. After each debate, a portion of the predebate interviewees were contacted once again to determine if they had watched the preceding debate, and if so, what their opinions were concerning the debates. There was a final wave of interviews after all the debates that covered most of thos who had already been interviewed twice. The information was collected over the telephone.

From the original data, this study used responses to a series of questions relating to the expectations held by the audience concerning

the debates and the gratifications they derived from watching the debates. The main items that measured the expectations and gratifications of the audience were based on the work of Blumler and McQuail. In the present study, the measures of uses and gratifications were followed by a scale on which the subject indicated how much each statement applied to him.

Once it was determined that the subject intended to watch the debates, the following questions were asked:

Let me read you a list of statements that people have made when asked why they intend to watch the debate. For each item, please tell me whether the item applies to you a lot, a little, or not at all. I intend to watch the debate...

1. To help me decide what the candidates are really like. (surveillance)
2. To help me decide what the candidates would do if elected. (surveillance)
3. To help me keep up with the main issues of the day. (surveillance)
4. To help me make up my mind about how to vote in the election. (vote guidance)
5. To obtain information about the candidates to use in conversation with others. (anticipated conversation)
6. To help me decide who is going to win the election. (excitement)
7. To enjoy the excitement of the campaign and the election. (excitement)
8. To remind me of my candidate's strong points. (reinforcement)

The same eight items were used to measure the gratifications received from watching the debates in the interviews after each debate and again in the final wave of interviews after all the debates had occured. The only difference is that this set of gratification items were worded in the past tense.

An index of audience media activity will be built from the responses to questions about what the respondents recall seeing about the campaign in the two weeks prior to the interview. The questions were worded so

that the respondents had to give specific items about media content and not just a general recall or estimate of what they may have seen. This use of audience recall of specific media content to measure media activity is based on one of the ideas put forth by Blumler (1978). It should be pointed out that while the original study also included content recall questions on other media, only the responses to questions dealing with television will be used because the debates were presented live on television. It is assumed that a measure of the television media activity is most appropriate when investigating the uses and gratifications received from exposure to the televisied debates. It should also be noted that this media activity index measures only the attention given to the television as it relates to political information. This in keeping with the narrow scope of this study that is investigating the uses and gratifications measures and their validity when used in the area of political information. After the media activity index is developed, the audience will be broken into groups of low, moderate, and high media activity to see if the level of media activity has any effect on the validity of the uses and gratifications measures.

Validation Procedures

The first step in assessing the validity of the uses and gratifications measures will be to look at their correlations across time. If it can be shown that the measures are significant correlations between the individual gratification measures across time, then this should provide some support for the validity of the items (McLeod and Becker, 1974). Based upon the theory that some media selection is based upon internal motivation that leads to some sense of gratification of the needs of the audience (McGuire, 1974), plus the findings of Palmgreen et al. (1979) showing a moderate to strong relationship between gratifications

sought and obtained:

H 1 : It is hypothesized that there is a significant correlation between each uses and gratifications measure taken before and after the debates.

After this first hypothesis is tested, this study will investigate the affect of audience activity on the validity of the uses and gratifications measures, an area that some authors feel needs more study (Blumler, 1978; Swanson, 1974). Based upon the idea that exposure to a medium would soon extinguish in the absence of reinforcement to maintain the habit (McGuire, 1974), it is expetted that those of greater media activity will be more likely to have stronger relationships between their uses and gratifications responses. In other words, those who make greater use of the media for political information are more likely to have stronger relationships between what they expect to receive from the media and the actual gratifications obtained than are those who make little use of the media for obtaining political information.

As was previously stated, the sample in this study will be broken into three levels of media activity. Then the validity of the uses and gratifications items will again be tested through the use of cross-time correlations between the uses and gratifications measures. This leads to the following set of hypothesis:

H 2 : It is hypothesized that there is a significant correlation between each uses and gratifications measure taken before and after the debates for those who are classified as low in their media activity.

H 3 : It is hypothesized that there is a significant correlation between each uses and gratifications measure taken before and after the debates for those who are classified as moderate in their media activity. It is further hypothesized that the correlations for the moderate media activity group will be greater than the correlations for the low media activity group.

H_4: It is hypothesized that there is a significant correlation between each uses and gratifications measure taken before and after the debates for those who are classified as high in media activity. It is further hypothesized that the correlations for those of high media activity will be greater than the correlations for those of moderate media activity.

A second attempt to determine the effectiveness and usefullness of the uses and gratifications measures will be undertaken in this study. If the audience is actively involved in using the media to satisfy some of their needs, as many uses and gratifications researchers assume is the case, then it should follow that the uses and gratifications measures should to some extent be able to account for a communications effect. This proposition was tested and shown to be true by McLeod and Becker (1974). Along the same lines used by McLeod and Becker, this study will use the uses and gratifications measures in an attempt to account for the amount of attention paid to the 1976 presidential debates. More specifically, this study will use the audience expectations expressed prior to the debates and the gratifications expressed after the debates in separate multiple regression analysis in an attempt to account for some of the variance in the number of debates watched by the audience. This part of the study will be guided by the following set of hypotheses:

H_5: It is hypothesized that the audience expectations of the entire sample expressed prior to the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

H_6: It is hypothesized that the audience expectations of the low media group expressed prior to the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

H_7: It is hypothesized that the audience expectations of the moderate media activity group expressed prior to the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

H_8: It is hypothesized that the audience expectations of the high media activity group expressed prior to the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

H_9 : It is hypothesized that gratifications of the entire group received from watching the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

H_{10} : It is hypothesized that the gratifications of the low media activity group received from watching the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

H_{11} : It is hypothesized that the gratifications of the moderate media activity group received from watching the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

H_{12} : It is hypothesized that the gratifications of the high media activity group received from watching the debates will be a significant predictor of the number of debates watched.

Results and Discussion

The results obtained from testing the previous hypotheses produced some interesting findings. To test the first set of hypotheses, pearson correlation coefficients were run between the expectations the audience had about the debates prior to the first program and the gratifications received from watching the debates. If the uses and gratifications measures were to be seen as providing some valid measure of audience motivations and gratifications, then it was hypothesized that there would be some correlation between the measures. The results indicated that only three of the eight measures provided significant correlations ($p=0.05$) across time when the responses for the entire group were used. This leads to a partial acceptance and a partial rejection of the first hypothesis. The hypothesis is retained for two surveillance measures (what the candidates are like, and what the main issues are) and the vote guidance measure. The hypothesis is rejected for the other five measures.

When the sample was divided according to media activity and cross-time correlations were run between identical measures in a test of the second, third and fourth hypotheses, the results were somewhat different than anticipated. For the low media activity group, there were no

significant cross-time correlations (p=0.05) for any of the uses and gratifications measures. This leads to the rejection of the second hypothesis. For the moderate media activity group, only one of the surveillance measures (what the candidate is like) provided a significant (p=0.05) cross-time correlation. The other seven measures did not provide significant cross time correlations. This leads to the retention of the third hypothesis for the candidate like measure and the rejection of the third hypothesis for the other seven measures.

Although the cross-time correlations for the low and moderate media activity groups were dismal, the cross-time correlations for the high media activity group were encouraging. In this set, six out of the eight measures provided significant cross-time correlations (p=0.05). The only two measures that did not provide significant cross-time correlations were an excitement measure (who wins) and a reinforcement measure (the candidate's strong points). Thus, the fourth hypothesis is retained for six measures (candidate like, will do, main issues, how vote, conversation, and enjoy campaign) and rejected for two measures (who wins, and strong point).

As an additional check on the validity of these measures at only one point in time, split alpha coefficients were run on all the preceeding measures. The measures produced split alpha reliability measures from 0.77246 to 0.98198.

In a second approach to determine the usefulness of the uses and gratifications measures to account for some of the variance in the number of debates watched, a series of multiple regression equations were run in a step-wise regression analysis. Both the expectations held prior to the debates and the gratifications received after watching the debates were used as independent predictor variables while

the number of debates watched was the dependent variable. This set of procedures was used to test the remaining series of hypotheses.

The results from this series of tests also produced some unexpected results. When looking at the entire group, only the gratifications measures (all eight of them) provided significant information toward the prediction of the number of debates watched ($p=0.05$). The two measures that were the most useful in predicting the number of debates watched were the "who wins" and the "candidate like" measures, an excitement and a surveillance measure. These results lead to the retention of hypothesis nine. The expectations measures for the sample as a whole did not prove to be significant predictors ($p=0.05$) of the number of debates watched. Thus, hypothesis five is rejected.

A similar pattern of results emerged when the sample was divided up according to media activity. When looking at the ability of the expectations to provide a significant prediction of the number of debates watched, only the responses given by those in the moderate activity group were useful in accounting for some of the variance in the number of debates watched. In this instance, the "conversation" measure (anticipated conversation), the "will do" measure (surveillance) and the "enjoy campaign" measure (excitement) were significant predictors of the number of debates watched. Of these, the "conversation" and "will do" measures were the only two which accounted for a change of 0.01 or greater in the total R square. Based on these results, the seventh hypothesis is retained. And since the expectations for the low and high media activity groups did not provide a significant amount of information toward the prediction of the number of debates watched, hypotheses six and eight are rejected.

The results for the gratifications measures for all the media activity groups were significant predictors of the number of debates

watched. In all of these groups, all of the gratifications measures provided significant information toward the prediction of the number of debates watched. For the low media activity group, the "conversation" measure (anticipated conversation) and the "enjoy campaign" measure (excitement) were the most useful in predicting the number of debates watched. For the moderate media activity group, the "who wins" measure (excitement) was the most use in predicting the number of debates watched. And for the high media activity group, the "will do" measure (surveillance), the "conversation" measure (anticipated conversation), the "strong point" measure (reinforcement), the "candidate like" measure (surveillance), and the "who wins" measure (excitement) were all useful in helping to account for some of the variance in the number of debates watched. Based on these findings, hypotheses ten, eleven, and twelve are retained.

Disscussion

In looking at the results from this study, it appears that there is room for disagreement about the validity and usefulness of the uses and gratifications measures. While there is some belief in the uses and gratifications method, this study at least raises some doubts about this approach. This doubt is raised from the results showing only three of the eight uses and gratifications measures providing any correlation between identical measures. These findings may give some support to the critics of the uses and gratifications method when they argue that the responses from the audience may be only a random set of reactions that are good for only one point in time. While it would not be expected that all eight measures would provide near perfect or even moderately high correlations across time, if one were to base some faith in the measures, it should be expected that there would be

at least weak correlations between a majority of the measures across time. This expected correlation across time is suggested in the comments by McLeod and Becker (1974) and in the ideas expressed by McGuire (1974). Although Palmgreen et al. (1979) found moderate to strong relationships among the uses and gratifications items in their study, it should be kept in mind that the responses for both the uses and gratifications questions were gathered at one point in time. What the findings from this study suggest is that the uses and gratifications measures may not be as reliable over time as was previously suggested.

Perhaps the most interesting results from this study lie in the fact that while the people classified as low or moderate in their media activity did not show any consistency in their responses across time, those people who were classified as high in media activity actually did show a high degree of consistency in their responses to the uses and gratifications questions across time. What these results suggest is that the old idea of treating the entire audience as being highly active in their use of the media needs to be revised to account for differing levels of media activity when using the uses and gratifications method. The results from this study suggest that the uses and gratifications items provide their most highly reliable results when used with people who are actually highly active in their use of the media.

When looking at the results from this study, it would be wise to remember that the criteria used to classify media activity involved only responses to television and political information. Obviously, this classifying system is not intended to provide an overall picture of media activity. But it is argued that this method of classifying media activity is appropriate for this study that dealt with political information presented over television.

If the results from this study hold up in future studies using the uses and gratifications method where audience media activity is not assumed to be an all or nothing proposition, then the basic assumption that the audience is an active seeker of information from the media may have to be reevaluated. The results from this study may be suggesting is that for those who are active seekers of information from the media, they do in fact make a rational choice of media content and are able to gain some sense of satisfaction from their exposure to the media. On the other hand, those people who are not active users of the media may not be so rational in their selection of the media and may not receive any related gratification from their exposure to the media.

The second major effort in this study to test the validity and usefulness of the uses and gratifications measures also leads to the conclusion that the uses and gratifications measures are not reliable and useful as some would suggest. The chief strength of the uses and gratifications measures in this study was the ability of the gratifications items to account for a large amount of the variance in the number of debates watched. As far as providing a method for determing what the people received from their exposure to the media, the gratifications items appear to be useful. ... Where the system begins breaking down is when one attempts to use the audience expectations to account for some of the variance in the number of debates watched. In only one instance, where the audience was classified as moderate in their media use, did the expectations expressed prior to the debates give any useful information in accounting for the number of debates watched. In all other instances, including when the entire audience was treated as a whole, the expectations expectations expressed prior to the debates did not provide any useful information about the number of debates watched.

The results from this study suggest that one again, the uses and gratifications measures are not as useful in predicting and accounting for exposure to the media. But as a method for explaing audience gratifications received from exposure to the media, this method seems to work rather well.

Perhaps the problem with the inability of the expectations measures to really provide a consistent, if even somewhat weak, method of accounting for audience behavior is the idea that maybe the audience is not totally rational in its selection of the media. It may be that the audience, as a whole, is not really aware of what the media fare will offer them, and thus their expectations about the media would not provide a useful measure to account for the exposure to the media. In short, ignorance of media content may lead to random expectations about media content may lead to random exposure to the media.

Another reason for the inability of the expectations to provide some indication of the amount of media exposure may be due to the fact that the uses and gratifications measures themselves are not highly reliable across time, as was indicated in this study. Measures that are less than reliable across time cannot be expected to provide useful information about audience exposure to the media.

In looking at this study, it would be wise to keep in mind that the focus of this investigation has dealt only with exposure to a selected media program and with a selected audience. The findings are in no way intended to be representative of a national audience or to be representative of media use in general. What the results from this study can be used for is to raise a samll question about the reliability of the uses and gratifications measures, especially when these

measures are used across time with an audience of differing levels of media activity. The findings aslo suggest that one of the basic assumptions of an active audience should be reexamined in terms of varying levels of activity. It appears that differing levels of media activity does have an impact on the reliablity of the uses and gratifications measures. With further investigation into this area, perhaps there will one day be a useful method for explaining how and why people use the media. But until that day is reached, there remains a lot more to be done before one can be truly confident that the uses and gratifications method will provide an accurate means of explaining audience media behavior.

Table 1

PANEL DESIGN FOR THE 1976 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES AND ELECTION STUDY

Group	Interview 9/9-9/18	Debate 9/23	Interview 9/24-9/27	Debate 10/6	Interview 10/7-10/10	Debate 10/11	Interview 10/12-10/17	Debate 10/24	Interview 10/26-11/1
1	(n=97)	X	(n=97)	X		X		X	(n=97)
2	(n=108)	X		X	(n=108)	X		X	(n=108)
3	(n=90)	X		X		X	(n=90)	X	(n=90)
Control	(n=98)	X		X		X		X	(n=98)
Control		X		X		X		X	(n=112)

Group 1 = 97
Group 2 = 108
Group 3 = 90
Group 4 = 98

Total = 393

Table 2

DESIGN FOR THIS RESEARCH

Group	Interview	Debate	Interview	Debate	Interview	Debate	Interview	Debate	Interview
1	(n=97)	X		X		X		X	(n=97)
2	(n=108)	X		X		X		X	(n=108)
3	(n=90)	X		X		X		X	(n=90)
Control	(n=98)	X		X		X		X	(n=112)

Table 3

EXPECTATIONS PRIOR TO THE DEBATES

Item	Level: A Lot n	%	A Little n	%	Not at all n	%
What candidates strong points are	159	(43.8)	137	(37.7)	66	(18.2)
Watch for anticipated conversation	86	(23.4)	162	(41.2)	119	(32.4)
Vote guidance	181	(49.5)	95	(26.0)	90	(24.6)
To learn who wins the election	79	(21.8)	106	(29.3)	177	(48.9)
What candidates would do if elected	213	(58.4)	114	(31.2)	38	(10.4)
Enjoy the excitement of the campaign	70	(19.2)	136	(37.4)	158	(43.4)
To learn the main issues of the day	211	(57.7)	113	(30.9)	42	(11.5)
To learn what candidates are like	218	(59.7)	107	(29.3)	40	(11.0)

Table 4

GRATIFICATIONS FROM WATCHING THE DEBATES

Item	Level: A Lot n	%	A Little n	%	Not at all n	%
What candidates strong points are	54	(25.4)	85	(39.9)	74	(34.7)
Watched for anticipated conversation	28	(13.3)	77	(36.5)	106	(50.2)
Vote guidance	28	(13.1)	63	(29.4)	123	(57.5)
To learn who wins the election	11	(5.2)	38	(18.1)	161	(76.7)
What candidates would do if elected	48	(22.3)	80	(37.2)	87	(40.5)
Enjoy the excitement of the campaign	35	(16.5)	60	(28.3)	117	(55.2)
To learn the main issues of the day	37	(17.3)	76	(35.5)	101	(47.2)
To learn what the candidates are like	48	(22.4)	105	(49.1)	61	(28.5)

Table 5

MEDIA ACTIVITY GROUPS

Number of campaign items recalled	Absolute frequency	Percentage of total	Media group
0	169	43.0	Low
1-2	158	40.2	Moderate
3 or more	66	16,8	High

Table 6

THE NUMBER OF DEBATES WATCHED

Number of debates	Absolute frequency	Percentage of total
0	41	10.4
1	71	18.1
2	72	18.3
3	98	24.9
4	111	28.2

Table 7

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN IDENTICAL ITEMS TAKEN BEFO

	The Entire Sample
Item	Pearson Correlation
Strong points	ns (p>0.05)
Conversation	ns
How vote	0.0906 (393) p=0.036
Who wins	ns
Will do	ns
Enjoy campaign	ns
Main issues	0.1016 (393) p=0.022
Candidate like	0.0910 (393) p=0.036

	Low Media Activity Gr
Item	Pearson Correlation
Strong points	ns (p>0.05)
Conversation	ns
How vote	ns
Who wins	ns
Will do	ns
Enjoy campaign	ns
Main issues	ns
Candidate like	ns

Moderate Media Activity Group

Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
Strong points	ns ($p>0.05$)
Conversation	ns
How vote	ns
Who wins	ns
Will do	ns
Enjoy campaign	ns
Main issues	ns
Candidate like	0.1464 (158) p=0.033

High Media Activity Group

Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
Strong points	ns ($p>0.05$)
Conversation	0.2781 (66) p=0.012
How vote	0.3691 (66) p=0.001
Who wins	ns
Will do	0.2443 (66) p=0.024
Enjoy campaign	0.2745 (66) p=0.013
Main issues	0.3035 (66) p=0.007
Candidate like	0.2065 (66) p=0.048

Table 8

SUMMARY TABLES FOR REGRESSION EQUATIONS USING USES AND GRATIFICATIONS MEASURES AS PREDICTORS OF THE NUMBER OF DEBATES WATCHED

Expectations used to predict the number of debates watched for the moderate media activity group

Analysis of variance	DF	SS	MS	F
Regression	3	13.05120	4.35040	3.06628
Residual	154	218.49310	1.41879	

SUMMARY TABLE

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	Simple R
Conversation	0.16111	0.02596	0.02596	-0.16111
Will do	0.23175	0.05371	0.02775	0.12667
Enjoy campaign	0.23742	0.05637	0.00266	0.00515

Gratifications used to predict the number of debates watched for the entire group

Analysis of variance	DF	SS	MS	F
Regression	8	233.24196	29.15525	23.67970
Residual	384	472.79366	1.23123	

SUMMARY TABLE

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	Simple R
Who wins	0.55168	0.30453	0.30453	0.55168
Will do	0.56354	0.31758	0.01323	0.53195
Enjoy campaign	0.56869	0.32341	0.00582	0.53245
Strong point	0.57196	0.32714	0.00374	0.48211
Main issues	0.57431	0.32984	0.00269	0.52749
Candidate like	0.57461	0.33018	0.00035	0.50992
Conversation	0.57469	0.33026	0.00008	0.51443
How vote	0.57476	0.33035	0.00009	0.51363

Gratifications used to predict the number of debates watched by the low media activity group

Analysis of variance	DF	SS	MS	F
Regression	8	123.07775	15.38472	11.69143
Residual	160	210.54355	1.31590	

SUMMARY TABLE

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	Simple R
Conversation	0.58252	0.33933	0.33933	0.58252
Enjoy campaign	0.59799	0.35759	0.01826	0.57818
Will do	0.60263	0.36316	0.00557	0.55885
Candidate like	0.60382	0.36460	0.00144	0.55991
Strong points	0.60509	0.36613	0.00153	0.53861
Who wins	0.60616	0.36743	0.00129	0.56521
How vote	0.60713	0.36860	0.00118	0.55747
Main issues	0.60738	0.36891	0.00031	0.56258

Gratifications used to predict the number of debates watched by the moderate media activity group

Analysis of variance	DF	SS	MS	F
Regression	8	68.54426	8.56803	7.83213
Residual	149	163.00004	1.09396	

SUMMARY TABLE

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	Simple R
Who wins	0.52328	0.27382	0.27382	0.52328
Main issues	0.53031	0.28123	0.00741	0.50097
Enjoy campaign	0.53315	0.28425	0.00302	0.49759
Candidate like	0.53734	0.28873	0.00448	0.46168
Strong points	0.54047	0.29211	0.00337	0.43575
Will do	0.54225	0.29403	0.00192	0.47054
Conversation	0.54400	0.29594	0.00191	0.44347
How vote	0.54409	0.29603	0.00010	0.48383

Gratifications used to predict the number of debates watched by the high media activity group

Analysis of variance	DF	SS	MS	F
Regression	8	38.69376	4.83672	4.71489
Residual	57	58.47290	1.02584	

SUMMARY TABLE

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	Simple R
Will do	0.55525	0.30831	0.30831	0.55525
Conversation	0.57512	0.33076	0.02245	0.51150
Strong points	0.60451	0.36543	0.03467	0.42387
Candidate like	0.61770	0.38155	0.01613	0.44602
Who wins	0.62702	0.39316	0.01160	0.53780
How vote	0.63005	0.39697	0.00381	0.45828
Main issues	0.63091	0.39805	0.00108	0.46180
Enjoy campaign	0.63105	0.39822	0.00017	0.46005

Note:

Non-significant ($p=0.05$) were obtained for the regression equations using expectations of the entire group, the low media activity group, and the high media activity group to predict the number of debates watched.

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